

## *Flathead County Planning and Zoning*

### **What is a growth policy?**

Section 76-1-601 of Montana Code Annotated (M.C.A.) establishes a requirement for all county and municipal jurisdictions in the state of Montana to prepare a **growth policy**. A growth policy is not regulatory, but forms the conceptual foundation for future land use decisions and is a basis for future regulations. The Flathead County Growth Policy was adopted on March 19, 2007, and is intended to provide guidance for growth in Flathead County.

### **What is a neighborhood plan?**

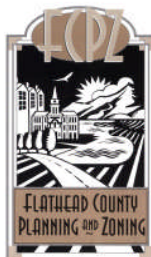
While the growth policy is designed to be a general policy document, it may contain more comprehensive site specific **neighborhood plans** pursuant to 76-1-601(4). Neighborhood plans are a form of a growth policy which provide more detailed information regarding land uses, policies, and issues relevant to that specific neighborhood or geographic area.

**Amendments** to the Growth Policy and adopted Neighborhood Plans may be warranted in order to adequately protect public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or general welfare in the process of community development. Amendments may be proposed by citizens or governing bodies, and may involve changes to text or officially adopted maps .

### *Mission Statement:*

"The Flathead County Planning & Zoning Office is committed to providing the highest level of planning services. We will accomplish this through employees who anticipate public needs, and promote a work environment that encourages creativity, communication and cooperation. The Office will also encourage professional development and training for all staff members."

For more information, contact:



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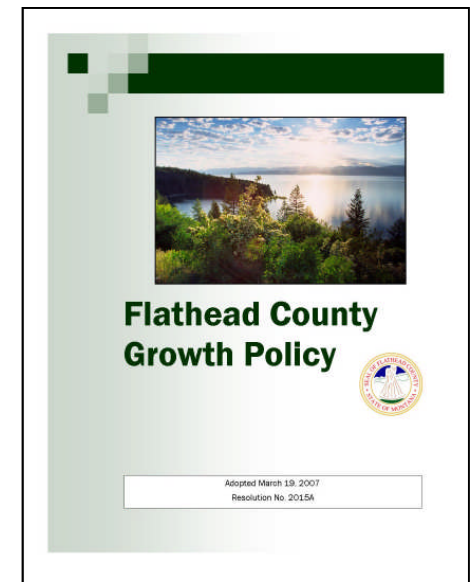
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Website: [http://flathead.mt.gov/planning\\_zoning](http://flathead.mt.gov/planning_zoning)

*Flathead County  
Planning & Zoning*

## **Growth Policy Amendment**



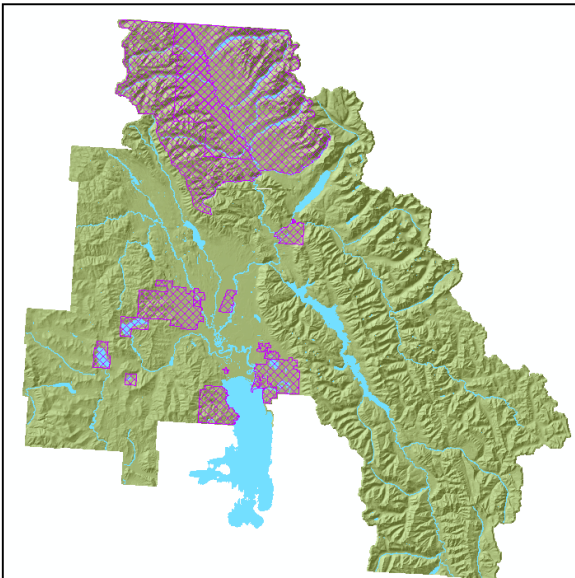
Basic information regarding  
Growth Policy amendments

## Why amend a growth policy?

Goals and policies of growth policies are generally implemented through zoning and subdivision regulations. Certain zoning related processes require compliance with the effective growth policy. Although growth policies are required to be updated regularly, **amendments** typically address current conditions and provide more detail to a specific geographic area or neighborhood.

The following are examples where a growth policy amendment may be warranted:

- creation of new zoning districts
- expansion of an existing zoning district
- zone change requests
- when significant changes to limiting infrastructure have occurred (i.e. roads, public water and sewer facilities, etc.)



Existing Neighborhood Plan Boundaries –circa 2009

## What is the procedure for a growth policy amendment?

There are several steps involved in pursuing a growth policy map or text amendment:

- pre-application meeting;
- public workshops;
- application process;
- staff review of the proposal;
- meeting before a local land use advisory council (as applicable);
- public hearing before the Planning Board; and
- a meeting before the Board of Commissioners.

In order to comply with the Flathead County Growth Policy and MCA 76-1-601, the review process for a requested amendment will evaluate several criteria, including:

- an inventory of existing characteristics and features (land uses, population, housing needs, economic conditions, local services, public facility, and natural resources) within the proposed amendment area;
- A description of projected trends (land uses, population, housing needs, economic conditions, local services, public facility, and natural resources) anticipated within the proposed amendment area;
- the potential for fire and wildland fire in the proposed amendment area;
- existing and proposed residential and commercial densities;
- existing and future public facilities necessary to efficiently serve projected development and densities within proposed amendment area ;
- potential for adverse impacts to wildlife, agricultural water facilities, public facilities, local government services, public health and safety, natural resources, agricultural production; and
- proposed measures, techniques, and incentives to mitigate potential adverse impacts.

## What is the timeline for a growth policy map or text amendment?

Growth policy amendments are adopted through 'Resolution' in compliance with standards established in MCA 76-1-604. Due to requirements associated with public workshops and the review procedure, growth policy amendments typically require 4-12 months to accomplish, depending upon the complexities involved with the proposal.

## Helpful considerations for growth policy amendment requests...

- Schedule a pre-application meeting early to evaluate the viability of the proposal before expending time and money;
- Because land use designations, goals, and policies of growth policies form the comprehensive foundation for future land use decisions and regulations, public participation is necessary. Plan ahead for legally noticed public workshops to involve all stakeholders and property owners within the proposed amendment area before submitting an application;
- Pay attention to application due dates and corresponding public meeting dates and timelines;
- Once submitted, the application fee is non-refundable;
- There are no guarantees of approval;
- If a growth policy map or text amendment is approved, there is no guarantee that a related subsequent request (i.e. zone change request) will be approved.

### Easy Access!!

Pre-application meeting request forms AND Growth Policy Amendment applications can be obtained at this office and on the Planning and Zoning Department website:

[http://flathead.mt.gov/planning\\_zoning](http://flathead.mt.gov/planning_zoning)